



Welcome to the Parish of Saint Michael Thirroul



PARISH BULLETIN
23/24 SEPTEMBER 2023
25TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME ✦ YEAR A
REFERENDUM INFORMATION

THIS WEEK'S READINGS

Just Imagine

Why does the gospel reading get such special attention at Mass? Why do we hold the book up? Because it is a story, the story of Jesus. We are struck by the narrative about him, much more than we are by the sometimes-complicated theology in Paul's letters. And within the gospels, which are themselves stories, we find the parables Jesus told.

Take a good look at the parable in Sunday's Gospel and let that story lead you. See if it works. Imagine the landowner hiring laborers for his vineyard, as he shakes their rough hands and invites them to work. You can see their satisfied smiles, since they know they will get the usual daily wage.

The day gets hotter. And hotter. High noon has come and the owner treks back to town to shop for this and that. He glances around. Men, leaning on buildings, loitering really, bored but still hopeful. The owner crosses over to them and offers to hire them. They come to life and hurry off to his vineyard to earn just half a day's wages. It is more than nothing.

Then the workday is about over. The owner is still in town for whatever reason, and what should he see but men lolling about in doorways, wet with sweat from the heat and from their dejection. To their surprise, he hires them too.

Day ends and "just wages" are handed out. But look: it is the exact same amount for every worker, no matter how many or how few hours each had worked. Look at the faces. The late ones smiling sheepishly. Anger in the ones who had slaved all day. This is not fair! We demand our rights! We put in the time and these oafs did nothing.

What does the story mean? You will find the answer if you sense the scene rather than just use brain power. Let your imagination see the kindness in the owner's face. Call to mind the gloom of the ones hired so late. See their amazement now.

Obviously, such wages are not a strict remuneration for hours worked. They more like a gift from a fond heart. How does this feel to you?

Didn't Jesus tell his parable to show how God's caring heart works, how he gives a depth of love to each person in this world, especially to ones who suffer and are left behind?

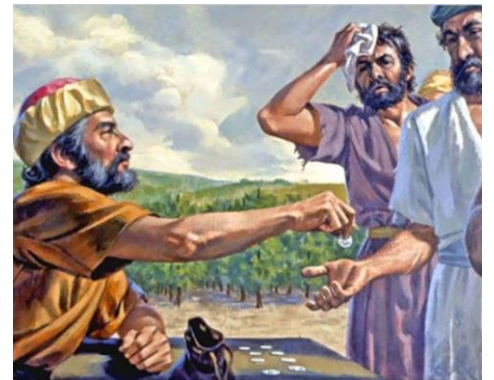
If it is hard to see, ask for light.

'The last will be first and the first last'. These words of Jesus, with which today's reading from Matthew concludes, occur in different contexts in all three synoptic gospels – God's ways constantly overturn our human expectations. And that is the lesson of the parable in today's gospel. Of all the parables of Jesus, the story of the labourers in the vineyard is probably the most puzzling for Christians of successive generations. That means that it is a great success, that it achieves what Jesus intended. A plausible story, reflecting the common experience of his hearers begins to unfold. It was normal for day labourers seeking employment to gather in public places. One denarius would have been a normal day's wage. We are given a hint where the story is leading however; Israel, the Lord's vineyard, was a familiar theme of the scriptures. An element of suspense holds the attention of the listeners – what is the unusual behaviour of the landowner leading to? Then the conclusion of the story comes as a shock, leaving us unsettled, as our reasonable expectations are not fulfilled.

That is the purpose of the parable, to invite us to leave aside the human logic and predictability with which we shape our world, and to enter the Kingdom announced by the Saviour, the new world shaped by God's generous and merciful ways. This parable may have been directed originally at the Pharisees' refusal to hear the Good News of God's ways brought by Jesus; but the fact that we still find ourselves challenged by the story indicates that it has a lesson that is valid for every generation.

'Did we not agree? Take your earnings'. God will never be unjust. But the Lord's great plan for the human family has a measure that goes far beyond our human calculations of what is appropriate and just – designs of generosity and mercy conceived in the eternal depths of the divine freedom. 'Yes, the heavens are as high above earth as my ways are above your ways'.

Jesus is calling us to bow down before the mystery of God's 'grace'. 'Why be envious because I am generous?' 'Grace' is the term used by the scriptures, for this new world of God's generosity announced by Jesus. In a sense, 'grace' is the essential message of the New Testament – where the term occurs countless times: 'God's grace has been revealed to save the whole human race' (Titus 2:11); 'It is by God's grace you have been saved, through faith; not by anything of your own ... so that nobody can claim the credit' (Ephesians 2:8). The 'grace' or favour of God announced in the Christian gospel is God's generous outreach to each one of us determined before time began. Because God's will is effective and all-powerful, 'grace' also refers to the many blessings of our new life in Christ. Our Catholic



✠✠ upbringing has stressed these created effects; but we should have given more attention to the folly of divine love made known to us through these blessings. This, we could say, is the point of Jesus' parable: 'Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with all the spiritual blessings of heaven in Christ' (Ephesians 1:3).

All today's readings encourage us to take stock of how we are responding to God's amazing love. Isaiah encourages us to seek our gracious God while God may be found, to call on God while God is near. We need God's mercy, and we are in great need of God's forgiveness. Let us not take this closeness for granted but cry out to God, now.

QUESTIONS ABOUT THIS SUNDAY'S SCRIPTURE READINGS

First Reading **Isaiah 55:6-9**

- ✠ "Seek the Lord while he may be found, call on him while he is near." Can God always be near you? What helps you remember the injunction to "find God in all things" in your life?
- ✠ Isaiah is writing about a call to conversion in this reading. "Let the wicked person forsake their way." For what ways do we need to ask for mercy, and need to "forsake"? What about environmental, or racial or immigrant injustices, and fixing the wrongs? Does God ever withhold mercy or pardon?

Second Reading **Philippians 1:20-24, 27**

- ✠ Is there someone or some group who "exalts" the Lord for you? Every time you are around him/her/them, do you feel Christ is somehow present. Why is that? What is it about them that "clears your eyesight"? Could they be ordinary saints?
- ✠ What did Paul mean when he said, "For to me, living is Christ and dying is gain." What do you think was the "fruitful labour" for Paul? What is your "fruitful labour"?

Gospel **Matthew 20:1-16**

- ✠ This Gospel reading is not about strict justice but about outrageous generosity. Are any of us ever "worthy of grace," first hour worker or eleventh? How would grace be handed out if people made the rules? What is the message for you in your everyday life?
- ✠ The landowner went out to hire labourers at nine, noon, three and five o'clock. According to Pope Francis, what happens to the Church if it doesn't keep "going out" to all the places where it's needed? What goes beyond justice when considering a just payment in the parable?

Our communities are also called to go out to the various types of "boundaries" that there might be, to offer everyone the word of salvation that Jesus came to bring. ... The Church needs to be like God: always going out; and when the Church does not go out, she becomes sick with the many evils we have in the Church. And why are these illnesses in the Church? Because she does not go out. It is true that when someone goes out there is the danger of getting into an accident. But better a Church that gets into accidents because she goes out to proclaim the Gospel, than a Church that is sick because she stays in. God always goes out because he is a Father, because he loves. The Church must do the same: always go out.

His way of acting is more than just, in the sense that it goes beyond justice and is manifested in Grace. Everything is Grace. Our salvation is Grace. Our holiness is Grace. In giving us Grace, he bestows on us more than what we merit. And so, those who reason using human logic, that is, the logic of the merits acquired through one's own greatness, from being first, find themselves last. ... "

Let us remember who was the first canonized saint in the Church: the Good Thief. He "stole" Paradise at the last minute of his life: this is Grace. This is what God is like, even with us. Instead, those who seek thinking of their own merits fail; those who humbly entrust themselves to the Father's mercy, rather than being last—like the Good Thief—find themselves first...

How much suffering, how many wounds, how many wars could be avoided if forgiveness and mercy were the style of our life! ... How many disunited families, who do not know how to forgive each other. How many brothers and sisters bear this resentment within. It is necessary to apply merciful love to all human relationships: between spouses, between parents and children, within our communities, in the Church and also in society and politics.

— Pope Francis, *Angelus*, 20 September 2020.

CENTENARY OF THE PARISH – SATURDAY, 28 OCTOBER

All are invited to join our parish family, old and new, to celebrate the Parish's first 100 years! Mass with Bishop Brian will be held at **17:30 on Saturday, 28 October**, followed by a community gathering: a BBQ in the school grounds for **all**. Further details to follow. In addition, to celebrate the Centenary, you will be able to order special mementos: **100 Year Anniversary Book; Centenary Wine Glasses; Centenary Wines – Sauvignon Blanc or Merlot**. Order forms are available in the church, from the Parish Office, or on the Parish's website or with the Bulletin emails. **Orders** need to be placed by **Tuesday, 3 October the latest**. Hand or email in your order form to the Parish Office, or in a special box on the front seat in the church. **By 10 October**, please phone or email the Parish Office, or complete the sheet in the church indicating how many from your family will be attending the **BBQ dinner after the 17:30 Mass on Saturday, 28 October**. All are invited to attend.

Order Forms for mementos are available from the church, the Parish Office or online.

AN OPEN LETTER ON THE VOICE TO CHURCH LEADERS FROM REV TIM COSTELLO*

28 August marks the 60th anniversary of Martin Luther King's 'I have a dream speech'. Those prophetic words for all Americans are now etched in history.

Less well known, but no less important, is King's prophetic words to white religious leaders written from Birmingham Jail. It was smuggled out written around edges of old newspapers and raggedy bits of paper as he was allowed nothing to write on.

He addresses the white clergy who claimed to support the cause of equality, but called his direct action "unwise and untimely". While those clergy leaders urged "patience" and delay, he responded that he had "never yet engaged in a direct action movement that was 'well timed' according to the timetable of those who have not suffered unduly from the disease of segregation... We have waited for more than 340 years for our constitutional and God-given rights."

The letter from Birmingham Jail is as heavy-hearted as his Washington speech is uplifting. To ministers saying "Those are social issues, with which the gospel has no real concern," King revealed a disappointment. It is the pain of a brother and not an enemy: "I do not say this as one of those negative critics who can always find something wrong with the Church. I say this as a Minister of the Gospel who loves the Church, who was nurtured in its bosom, who has been sustained by its spiritual blessings and who will remain true to it as long as the cord of life shall lengthen".

MLK's words inspired me years later to become a Baptist minister. I even named one of my sons after him. But there's something freshly relevant today as he calls out "a completely other worldly religion which makes a strange, un-Biblical distinction between body and soul, between the sacred and the secular". Among so many of Australia's church leaders, on the profoundly important issues of Indigenous injustice we find caution rather than courage. They say these issues are too divisive for church leaders to address. I encounter this argument every day, as church leaders close their doors to Indigenous leaders and voices like mine seeking to explain why we are voting Yes in the Voice referendum.

We are voting in a referendum, not a partisan election. This referendum was requested by an overwhelming majority of Indigenous leaders. The current PM has answered that request, and he has the support of many prominent past and present Liberals, including half of Australia's state conservative leaders. It is a chance for Australians to transcend the tribalism of day-to-day politics. So let me explain why I believe this goes to the heart of my faith.

As a Christian I ask the question: what right do we have to oppose what our Indigenous brothers and sisters are asking for? In 1937, William Cooper, a Yorta Yorta Christian leader, secured thousands of Indigenous signatures on a petition to ask King George the VI 'to prevent the extinction of the Aboriginal race: to secure better living conditions for all; and to afford Aboriginal representation in Parliament. The King never saw it as the PM and States blocked it even being sent. And where were the Churches then? Sadly, over the years we have gone missing or remained deaf to the pleas of our brothers and sisters. But that is not how our Christian story began.

From its earliest days, the church has navigated conflict and inequality. Jewish Christians insisted they would not eat with Christian Gentiles, until the apostles made it clear that transcending those divisions was at the heart of living out the gospel. They had the courage to overcome resistance, and the message of freedom in Christ and one family in Christ not two – a Jewish Christian and a Gentile Christian soon carried across the world. – *continued next week.*

* Rev Tim Costello is an Australian Baptist minister who was the Chief Executive Officer and Chief Advocate of World Vision Australia. Costello worked as a lawyer and served as mayor of St Kilda.

REFERENDUM 2023 – INFORMATION SESSION, 11:00, 25 SEPTEMBER – ALL WELCOME

At the heart of the upcoming Voice to Parliament Referendum is the recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, the world's oldest continuing culture, in the Australian Constitution. As Catholics, we have a responsibility to listen to the voices of First Australians and to work towards a more just and equitable society.

The mission of the National Aboriginal Torres Strait Islander Catholic Council is to educate and inform our fellow Catholics on this pivotal moment in Australia's history. We have collated and created statements and resources – grounded in the principles of Catholic Social Teaching – to help you on your process of discernment.

The Voice to Parliament Referendum provides all Catholics with a unique opportunity to come together as a community and draw upon our faith and moral grounding to make an informed decision. One Journey – Together. <https://indigenousvoice.church/>

In our Parish, the Pastoral Council has planned to have an **information session** for parishioners to find out about the Referendum. ***If you don't know, find out – don't be ignorant.*** All are welcome: **Monday, 25 September, 10:30am morning tea, then 11:00am in the church.** No booking required – just turn up.



TRANSPORT HERITAGE EXPO – CENTRAL STATION – 30 SEP TO 2 OCT

The award-winning Transport Heritage Expo brings Sydney's transport history to life with heritage train, bus and boat rides, heritage displays, entertainment and so much more! Don't miss this fantastic and nostalgic long weekend event for families and transport enthusiasts alike. Steam train rides, vintage bus rides, red rattler rides, steam boat rides, railmotor rides, clock tower tours https://www.transportheritageexpo.com/?mc_cid=f371b08e0c&mc_eid=43ed067496

SCRIPTURE READINGS THIS WEEK

Sundays Year A • Weekdays Year I

Monday	25 Sep	Monday of Ordinary Time Week 25	Ezra 1:1-6	Luke 6:16-18
Tuesday	26 Sep	Tuesday of Ordinary Time Week 25	Ezra 6:7-8,12,14-20	Luke 8:19-21
Wednesday	27 Sep	St Vincent de Paul, priest	Ezra 9:5-9	Luke 9:1-6
Thursday	28 Sep	Thursday of Ordinary Time Week 25	Haggai 1:1-8	Luke 9:7-9
Friday	29 Sep	Sts Michael, Gabriel, Rahael, archangels	Revelation 12:7-12	John 1:47-51
Saturday	30 Sep	St Jerome, priest, doctor	Zechariah 2:5-9	Luke 9:43-45

Sunday 1 Oct 26TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME • YEAR A – Scripture Readings are listed below.

THIS WEEK'S RECIPE: Rice Pudding Custard

3 cups milk; 1/3 cup caster sugar; 4 eggs; 1 teaspoon vanilla; pinch nutmeg.

Preheat oven to 180°C. Cook rice in a saucepan, drain. Whisk milk, sugar, eggs and vanilla in a bowl. Strain this through sieve in a large bowl. Stir in cooked rice. Line the base of a roasting pan with a tea towel. Place oven-proof dish in the pan. Pour mixture into dish, sprinkle with nutmeg. Pour enough boiling water into pan to reach half-way up dish. Bake 40 to 45 minutes.

Please send in your favourite recipe so it can be shared in the Bulletin – we need more recipes!

BLESSING OF ANIMALS, MONDAY, 2 OCTOBER AT 09:30

As usual, the Blessing of Animals will take place on the Monday of the long weekend, 2 October at 09:30 at the Parish of Saint Michael, 325 Lawrence Hargrave Drive, Thirroul. The blessing takes place in the courtyard next to the church. All animals under 800kg and their carers are welcome, though please keep the larger crocodiles on a tight leash. The Feast of St Francis of Assisi is on Wednesday, 4 October, with Mass at 09:00 – animals are welcome at that Mass.

PLEASE BRING IN ...ONE NON-PERISHABLE ITEM PER FAMILY EACH WEEK TO HELP THE NEEDY IN THE LOCAL ILLAWARRA AREA: drop items in the special plastic bins near the church entrances.

FORTHCOMING PARISH EVENTS

✦ Thursday, 28 September	19:15	Baptism Preparation Meeting for November Baptisms
✦ Friday, 29 September	09:30	Mass for the Feast of Sts Michael, Gabriel and Raphael
✦ Sunday, 1 October	02:00	Daylight Saving begins ... spring FORWARD one hour
✦ Monday, 2 October	09:30	Blessing of Animals in courtyard next to the church Ken leaves for USA and Canada for Canon Law Conferences
✦ Wednesday, 4 October	09:00	Mass for the Feast of St Francis of Assisi
✦ Friday, 6 October	09:30	Anointing of the Sick during Mass
✦ Weekend, 7/8 October		Blessing of October Wedding Anniversaries and Birthdays
✦ Saturday, 14 October	18:30	Dinner at Club Thirroul after 17:30 Mass
✦ Friday, 27 October	06:55	Ken returns from Canon Law Conferences
✦ Saturday, 28 October	17:30	Centenary Mass with Bishop Brian, then BBQ
✦ Wednesday, 1 November	09:00	All Saints Day Mass ... 19:00 First Penance



THIS Sunday's Readings – on website

25TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME • YEAR A

1 st Reading	Isaiah 55:6-9
2 nd Reading	Philippians 1:20-24
Gospel	Matthew 20:1-16

NEXT Sunday's Readings – on website

26TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME • YEAR A

1 st Reading	Ezekiel 18:25-28
2 nd Reading	Philippians 2:1-11
Gospel	Matthew 21:28-32

SUNDAY

MASS TIMES

Saturday	17:30
Sunday	08:00
☞ Saturday Mass recorded	

Parish of St Michael – Thirroul

One of the four Northern Illawarra Parishes
Moving forward as a Parish Family

Patrick Vaughan • Parish Priest

Andrew Granc ofm, Ken Cafe ofm • Assisting

Kerry Fabon • Parish Secretary

Tues, Wed 09:00-15:00; Fri 08:30-15:00

www.thirroulcatholic.org.au:1-16

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Parish School of St Michael

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USUAL WEEKDAY MASSES

Monday	_____
Tuesday	17:30
Wednesday	09:00
Thursday	09:00
Friday	09:30
Anointing of the Sick 1 st Friday	